

Overworked + Underemployed

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Sustainability Problems | Fall 2014

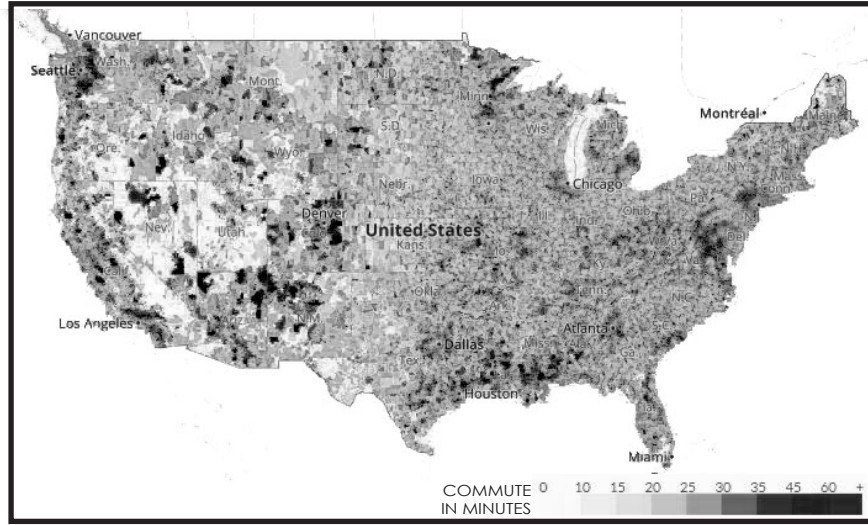
Global debates pinpoint the United States as both the nation that works the largest number of hours annually, and a nation where children spend the least amount of time in school, per day. This paradox has led to overworked parents, over-booked day cares, and under-cooked relationships. Our "40-hour" work weeks (which in reality now average to a 47-hour work week) originated as five eight hour days under the mantra of "8 hours labor, 8 hours recreation, 8 hours rest," however, capitalist drive and the value of money above all else, is leaving many individuals overworked, and America as a nation, underemployed. Reducing (and regulating) the standard work week to 30 hours offers instead, five 6-hour days, comparable to the average time a U.S. student spends in primary education on a daily basis. This change provides a more cohesive overlap of parent and child schedules offering for a more socially and culturally sustainable daily organization in-tune with the social behaviors of human beings.

While reducing the number of working hours is fundamentally backwards to the capitalist mentality, it in fact provides a better foundation for workplace productivity, conducive to four 90-minute highly focused intervals, separated by 20 minute breaks that offer the best cycle for human focus and refreshment. Additionally, employing each person at fewer hours, allows for more people to work the same position, thus increasing employment. Ideally, the work week would be reduced to 20 hour weeks in order to optimize employment under the traditional structure of work, essentially having Group A work the 20 hours that Group B has off, and visa-versa. However, with today's capitalist organization, and cost of living, perhaps beginning with a reduction to 30-hour weeks would offer for a greater ease of implementation to serve as a sort of transition period.

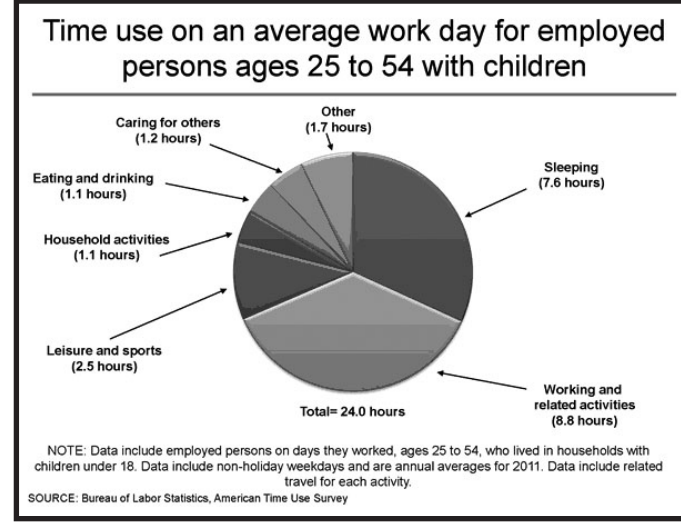
Ultimately, cutting the working hours in a week aims to increase all aspects of sustainability. Culturally, socially, behaviorally, more recreation time allows for time and opportunity to cultivate relationships, hobbies, and passions necessary for mental and emotional well-being. Ecologically, economically, organizationally, less time on the job provides more time to make environmentally conscious decisions when it comes to food, transportation, and waste management/reduction. More hours spent in your environment (as opposed to the work environment) establishes a more aware inhabitant who is, in theory, more conscientious of their place in and effect on their environment. More leisure time allows time to grow and maintain a personal food source, reducing the financial burden of food, time to spend with children (if applicable) reducing or eliminating daycare costs, and time to nurture personal interests and allow for personal endeavors to thrive.

With work hours steadily on the rise since the early 1990s, less vacation time, longer days, later retirement ages, and rising workplace dissatisfaction to the point of only 13% of Americans enjoy going to work, change in the fundamentals of American success and existence could offer an incredible ripple effect of sustainability across the nation in a variety of categories.

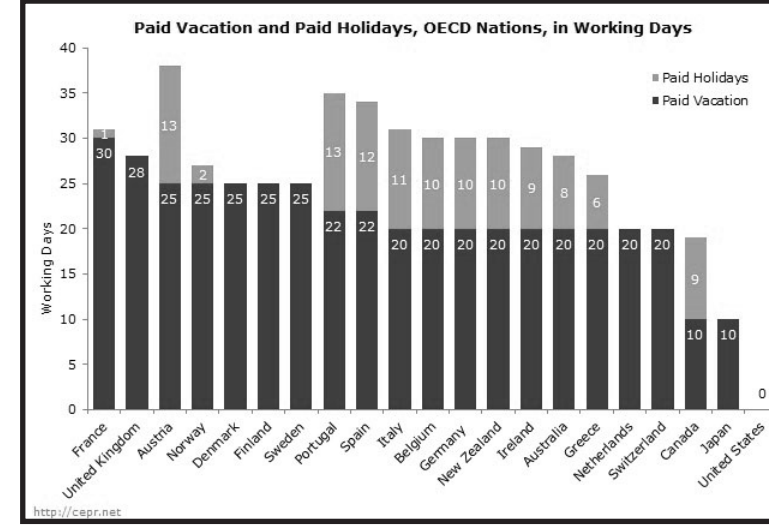
Re-Working the Work-Week



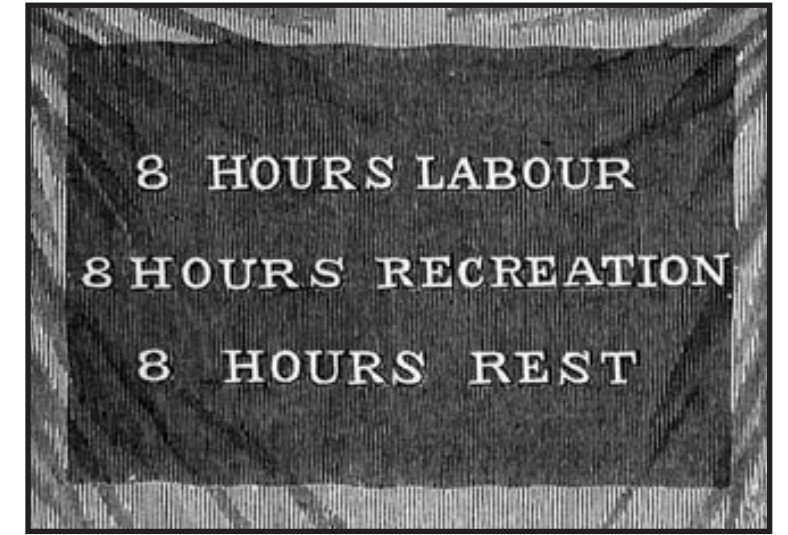
Average commute times in the United States are 25.4 minutes, ranging up to more than an hour. As population increases, the commute time is speculated to increase until it averages ninety minutes in 2050 as people are traveling farther to find work and sufficient pay.



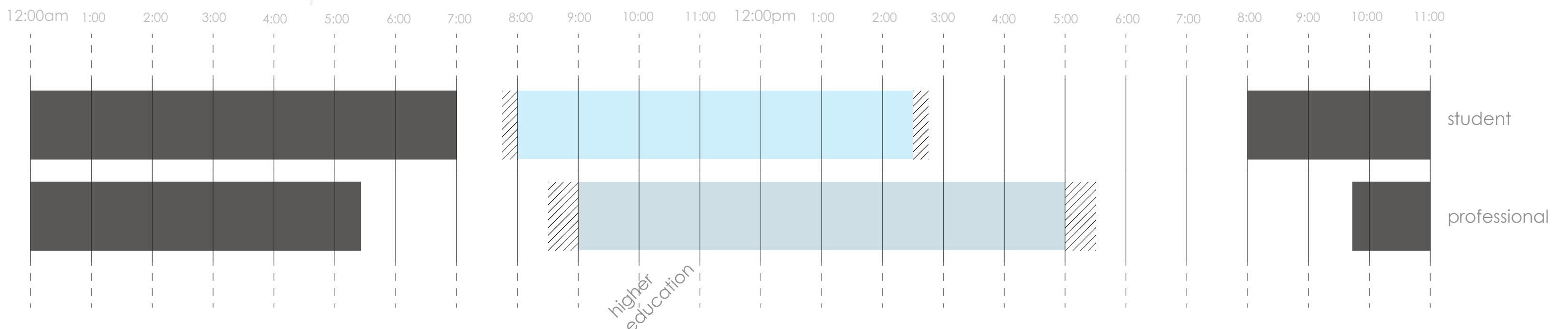
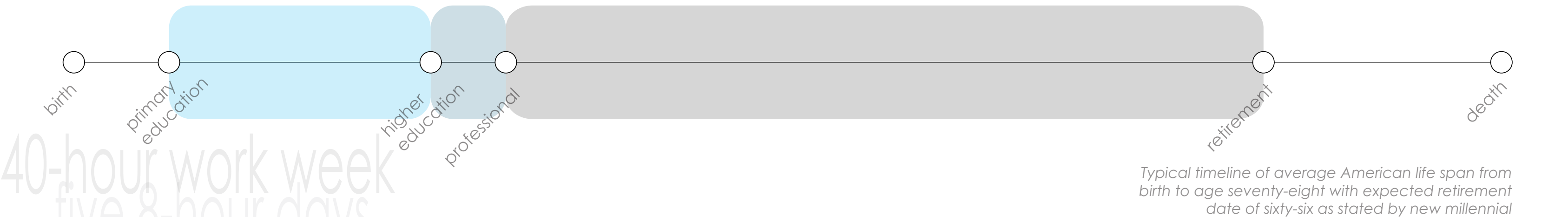
The average American with children, aged 25 - 54 years old, approximately 60% of the day is spent either at work or asleep leaving little time for leisure and/or family time after household duties are accomplished.



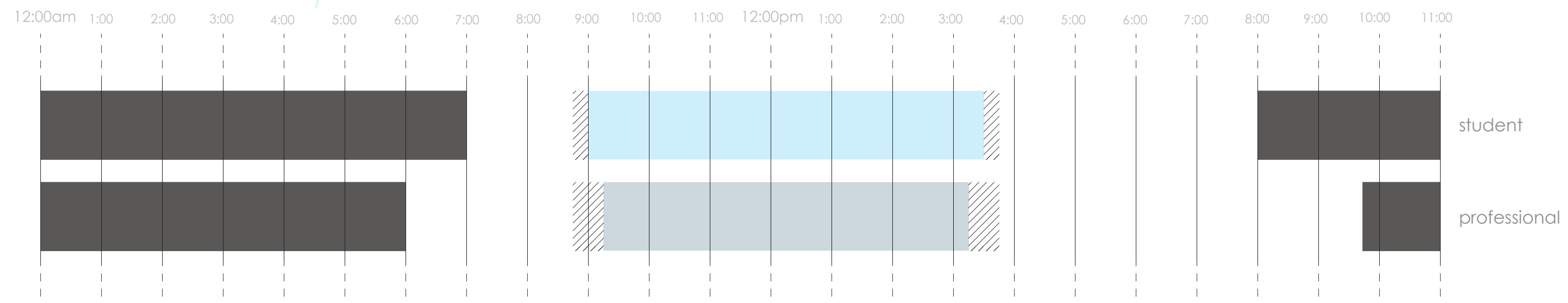
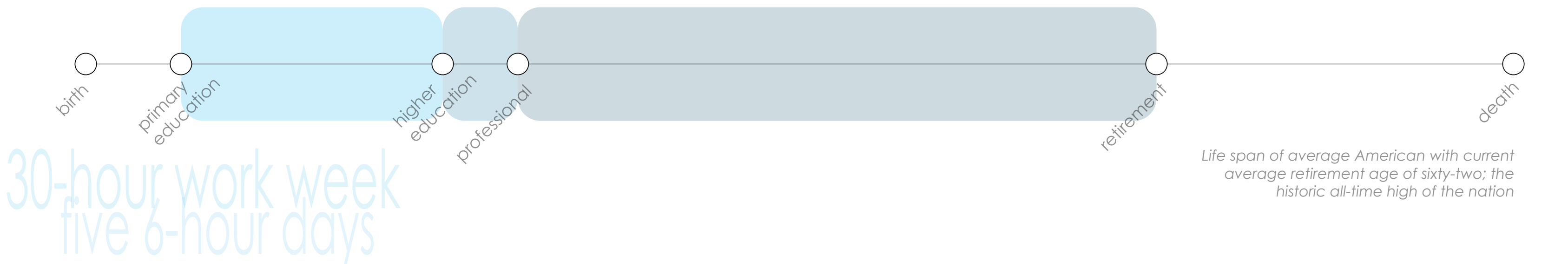
Americans spend more time annually at work than any other country in the world. The United States is the only developed nation without mandated paid time off and without paid parental time off offered to both parents.



The typical 8-hour work day was in response to the exhausting ten, twelve, and sixteen hour work days that arose as a product of industrialization and the strive for 24/7 optimization and efficiency.

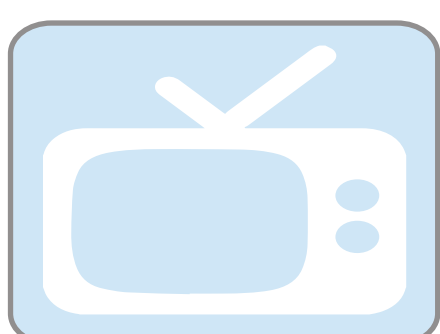


Hour blocking of average 24-hour day of the U.S. student and the U.S. professional

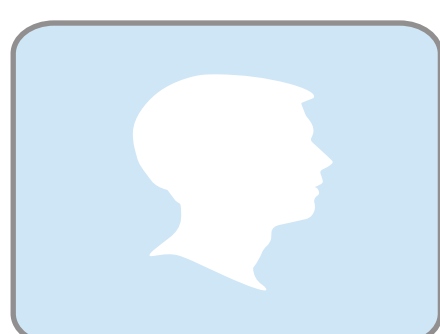


Shortening the work week helps to allow for both an alternative to the capitalist culture that perpetuates waste, over-work and the compulsion for more things, higher salaries, and thus longer hours; a shorter work week would also allow for a focus on the conventional issues of sustainability, giving more time to accommodate the perceived "inconveniences" with sustainable issues of time, cost, priorities, and

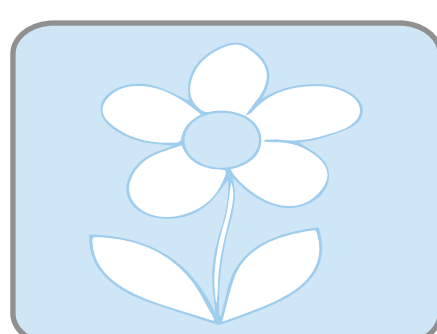
Hour blocking with proposed 30-hour work weeks of five 6-hour days synchronizing work and school schedules, allowing for the recommended 8-hour sleeping recovery blocks



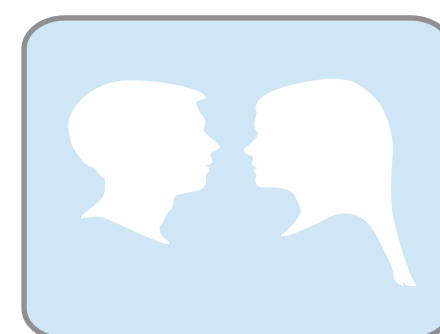
media + information



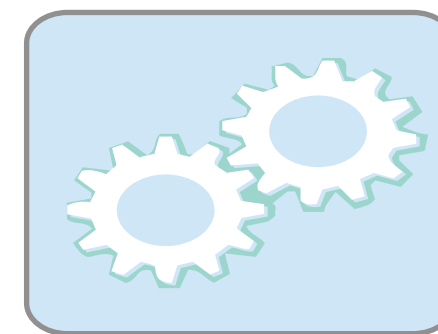
behavioral



ecological



cultural



organization



economic

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